



# PRIVATE FLYING

## Topics of the Day

### This England

**I**N this country it is almost customary for private owners and amateur pilots generally to treat flying as a rather haphazard means of personally conducted transport, and to treat winter flying in particular as a pastime demanding the utmost attention to weather reports. During the past six weeks or so—at least until the break in the weather—it has been possible to make real use of a normally equipped aeroplane on practically every day. Furthermore, it has generally been possible to fly without concentration and without the necessity for continuous map-reading. And that is what flying should be.

On one day at the beginning of last month I spent an afternoon wandering about the Midlands under a blue sky with visibility of the ten-mile order. In these circumstances maps were merely a comfort and the compass a useful device to encourage straight flying, but neither was in the least necessary. It would have been possible to fly on any old map.

In fact, there are more days of this kind during the year than most people imagine, and the depressing weather reports which are so often obtained are usually found, and rightly so, to be somewhat on the pessimistic side.

The ability to make a detour on the spur of the moment off a predetermined track without feeling slightly worried about one's whereabouts or about the weather in different parts of the country make flying for sheer amusement very well worth while. The track which is drawn between A and B, and which must be so closely followed in rain or poor visibility, appears very rarely to pass over any places of real interest. With little deviations from time to time a very ordinary cross-country flight, made however earnestly on business bent, can be made much more amusing.

A few years ago I used to fly with an owner—alas! no longer with us—who was very keen on archaeology, and the result was that map-reading developed a new interest. Such things as the sites of Roman villas usually show up very well from the air.

### Spectatorial

**D**URING this particular trip I had a look at the London Gliding Club centre near Dunstable and was not really surprised to find such a large number of parked cars and spectators of one kind or another. Not only is the spot a pleasant one in the ordinary course of events, but there really is something to see in this soaring business. In the old days people used to come out to watch the flying at aerodromes, but nowadays the power-driven devices simply go up and down—and there is nothing very new about that.

There is, however, still something surprising about a flying machine which goes up and stays up without the help of some form of motive power, and the spectators, generally speaking, appear to realise that sailplanes stay up by virtue of skill, and skill alone.

All this spectatorial business is a good thing, since one out of every hundred visitors will want to try his hand at the sport, and those flying clubs at which the membership is tending to fall off might attempt to attract the casual watcher. In the early days of the club movement people came quite automatically because

the sight of any solid matter well and truly adrift from the earth was an unusual one; nowadays, any club which wishes to attract the lay visitor must put on something special in the way of a show, and the risk here is that we shall go back to the absurd position when practically every club in the country ran some sort of display. The same visiting pilots put up the same demonstration show at every one of them, and no organiser appeared to be able to think of anything new. Spectators, consequently, became bored.

While on the subject of dropping membership, one or two very honest secretaries and other dignitaries have told me that they cannot reasonably put too much of the blame on to the Reserve system, since the great majority of Reserve pilots would not otherwise have been able to afford to fly. Unfortunately, the man or woman who has a sufficiency of spare cash is so often beyond the years when he or she cares to take up something entirely new and apparently (if one reads the papers) dangerous. Nevertheless it should still be possible, with a little effort, to attract new-comers from the class of people who are either ineligible for the Reserve or who do not feel inclined to tie themselves down in this way.

### Ground Transport

**O**NE of the least encouraging features of flying is the fact that aerodromes are necessarily not only a long way from the town centres, but also rather off the beaten track, and about a year ago I suggested that somebody might seriously consider the idea of organising a vast car-hire system for all reasonably busy aerodromes.

The airline people, of course, arrange their own ground transport for their passengers, but the private owner and club pilot who has just travelled two hundred miles in less than a couple of hours often has to waste at least another hour at an aerodrome before obtaining, at fabulous cost, some mediocre form of transport to take him to his real destination.

My idea really consists of an attempt to make the best of both worlds; to use an aeroplane for the long distances and yet to have a car always available for short-distance travelling. The non-flying traveller is, of course, in exactly the same position. He can choose between the effort involved in driving a car a very long way and the nuisance, if he decides to go by rail, of being without a car at the other end. The only difference is that the traveller by train is at least disgorged in the centre of things, where wheeled vehicles are obtainable at reasonable prices, whereas the pilot parks his aeroplane and either hopes for a lift or rings up some taxi-rank ten miles away.

INDICATOR.